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DE RUEHMS #0467/01 1331244
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P 131244Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8212
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000467

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN'S ALI MAJID COMMENTS ON IRAQ, UPCOMING VISIT
OF IRANIAN PRESIDENT

REF: A. MUSCAT 445

[B](#). MUSCAT 414 (NOTAL)

[C](#). MUSCAT 61 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo per 1.5 (B and D).

[1](#). (C) Summary: On the eve of Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad visit's to Muscat, General Ali bin Majid al-Ma'amari, Minister of the Royal Office and head of the Office of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, told me that he had become very pessimistic about Iraq's future. Nevertheless, Oman will continue to support Prime Minister al-Maliki as the leader of Iraq. In the one-on-one meeting May 13, Oman's nominal number two official indicated that Oman would have "no special message" for Ahmadi-Nejad, but would use its positive relationship with Tehran to "urge reason and avoid escalation." End Summary.

"Pessimistic" on Iraq

[2](#). (C) Echoing the assessment of both the Sultan (ref A) and Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi (ref B), General Ali Majid viewed the recent visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki as positive, leaving him and other senior Omanis with the impression of a PM "sincere, confident and understanding" of the problems confronting Iraq. The General also remarked that al-Maliki appeared genuinely "committed to addressing Iraq's problems and helping the people of Iraq" and generally described al-Maliki as "capable."

[3](#). (C) However, Ali Majid said, al-Maliki has surrounded himself with "too many Shi'a," many of whom were not trusted by Iraqi Sunni, and specifically referred to one of the PM's advisors, al-Rubaie, as distrusted "by everyone." Iraq would be "ungovernable," he firmly pronounced, without strong Sunni participation at senior levels of the government and armed forces. In this regard, al-Maliki appeared to be headed in the wrong direction. "He's getting weak," and other leaders in the GCC had already lost confidence in him, especially Saudi Arabia, he noted.

[4](#). (C) Ali Majid cautioned against a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. The Iraqi armed forces and police have "neither the capability nor leadership" to confront al-Qa'ida or the sectarian violence and our withdrawal would expose the country to more violence and weaken the Iraqi government. In sum, he said, "I am very pessimistic" about Iraq, but he offered no ideas to either us or the Iraqis for addressing the country's myriad problems. Nevertheless, Oman would continue to offer its support for al-Maliki as long as he worked to resolve the country's problems.

Ahmadi-Nejad Visit: Urging "Reason"

15. (C) The General played down any special significance to the May 14 visit of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad to Muscat. Emphasizing Muscat's positive bilateral ties with Tehran, he said Sultan Qaboos would take advantage of those to urge the Iranian leader to employ "reason and avoid provocative rhetoric and escalation" in its dealings with the West.

16. (C) While suggesting that the Omanis would take the high road in their discussions with the Iranians this week, Ali Majid reiterated his continuing concern over Iran's destabilizing actions in the region, including in Iraq (ref C). However, by avoiding "the specifics" of Iran's behavior and instead addressing the impact of its behavior on the region and the international community, the Omanis would be able to make a better impression on the visiting Iranian.

17. (C) He cited the example of the March kidnapping crisis involving British sailors and marines, during which the Omanis had engaged in low-key discussions with the Iranians to urge them to take a conciliatory approach to the problem. The Iranians had permitted Oman's ambassador in Tehran to visit the captive British personnel, confirming Iran's trust of the Omanis, he said. The Omanis would again use their special relationship with the Iranians to speak frankly about Iran and how it could address its problems in the region and elsewhere.

18. (C) The General said he was convinced that Iran had attempted to cover up its nuclear weapons program in the past but was unsure of Iran's activities now. He was familiar with the basic approach of the P5-plus one, but opined that Iran was unlikely to bow to the conditions that had been

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imposed on its nuclear program. He suggested that we look for some way to begin a dialog with the Iranians. While difficult, he said, a dialog would either force the Iranians to respond constructively or expose their intentions to the international community.
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